

Obituaries

John Richardson

General practitioner whose records on coxsackie infection won him worldwide fame

The international reputation that John Richardson acquired in the field of myalgic encephalitis (ME) research sprang from the records that he kept for 40 years of enteroviral infections, mostly coxsackie virus. He realised that enteroviral infections were endemic among his practice population on the south bank of the Tyne, spreading from one family to another and from one generation to the next. The public health authorities seemed to be unaware of it and facilities for identification were rarely available locally. The late Dr Eleanor Bell of Glasgow, who had conducted her own researches into the prevalence of enteroviral infections in southwest Scotland, was generous in filling the gap.

The clinical features of these infections varied from Bornholm disease—a common short illness with chest pain—to audible pericarditis, serious myocarditis, and valvulitis with dysfunction. Other features were muscle pain, jitter and weakness, sleep disturbance, hypersensitivity to sound and light, and mild confusion. Many organs in the body could also be affected. In the long term the effects were sometimes serious. While some members of a family would escape with a brief febrile illness only, coxsackie infection could leave one person struggling for years with ME or dilated cardiomyopathy. Worse still, John found that the infection would readily pass from the mother to her unborn child, which would be delivered with fibroelastosis or maldevelopment of the heart, or structural defects of the brain or other organ. He tried to prevent this in early pregnancy by giving



the mother intramuscular injections of human immunoglobulin.

Early on John believed that ME was an illness that could follow directly from a coxsackie infection and one that was capable of altering the whole personality and abilities of someone he had known for years. The idea that it was just depression or hysteria, a psychoneurosis or “all in the mind,” he found not only ludicrous and cruel, but also dangerous, and his records contain several examples of suicide. When patients told him that they had grown tired after taking vigorous or progressively “graded” exercise and found that they had to pay for it by being much worse for the next day or so, he believed them and sought other methods of treatment.

The fame of his records led James Mowbray, professor of immunopathology at St Mary's Hospital, London, to offer him unrestricted facilities for identification of the various strains of the coxsackie group of viruses, as well as other viruses less frequently encountered. Leonard Archard, now professor of biochemistry at Imperial College, London, was also helpful in culturing virus in samples of tissue sent to him and both became personal friends. John did not publish these records in the form of his book *Enteroviral and Toxin Mediated Myalgic Encephalitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and*

Other Organ Pathologies (Haworth Medical Press) until 2001.

John also became acquainted with Dr Melvin Ramsay, who defined benign myalgic encephalomyelitis in 1956 after studying an outbreak of Bornholm disease at the Royal Free Hospital, London. John became a founder member of the ME Association, renamed the Ramsay Research Fund in 1999 after Melvyn Ramsay's death.

John's own international reputation grew rapidly after an international symposium on myalgic encephalitis was held in Cambridge, United Kingdom, in 1989. He was chairman of it and the book that followed in 1992, *The Clinical and Scientific Basis of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis*, edited by Dr Byron Hyde, not only contains a chapter written by John, but is dedicated to him.

John gave up all NHS work in 1992 and his appointment as a senior police surgeon. However, he continued to see patients privately. Most came from the United Kingdom, but some also from France, Republic of Ireland, Belgium, and Norway. He refused fees, but suggested instead a contribution to the research fund that he established. This he used partly to finance scientific papers that he wrote and partly as gifts to individuals and university departments where the effects of long term survival of virus in the human body were being studied. His own papers were into what part of the brain was involved in ME. John also used the patient contributions to finance an annual international conference in his local area. The pursuit of these researches did not prevent him playing a full part in the general practice of which he was a partner, including training medical students sent to him by the university.

Outside medicine his main interest was music, especially playing the three manual pipe organ, which with assistance he had built in his own house and for which he composed 28 pieces. Predeceased by a daughter, he leaves a wife, Margaret (Peggy), and three children. [H A DEWAR]

John Richardson, former general practitioner Ryton, Tyne and Wear (b 1915; q Durham 1952), died in the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle, on 18 July 2002.

Advice

We will be pleased to receive obituary notices of around 250 words. Pressure on space means that in most cases we will be able to publish only about 100 words in the printed journal, but we can run a fuller version on our website. We will take responsibility for shortening. We do not send proofs. Good quality, original photographs are welcome. Please give a contact telephone number and, where possible, supply the obituary on a disk or by email to obituaries@bmj.com

Peter Alwyn-Smith

Former medical administrator (b 1916; q London 1942; KSJ, FFCM; FRCP), d 31 July 2002.

Peter Alwyn-Smith started a career in medical administration at the Ministry of Health in 1946. He moved to Wales in 1949 as medical officer at the Welsh Regional Hospital Board, becoming senior administrative medical officer in 1960 and overseeing the development of the district general hospitals in Wales. When the health service in Wales was reorganised in 1974 he became a principal medical officer at the Welsh Office and was later appointed by the secretary of state as medical officer for complaints. In retirement, Peter became a postgraduate student at the University College of Wales, Swansea, and gained the diploma in the philosophy of health care. He leaves a wife, Alison; a daughter; and two grandchildren. [DAVID PARRY] P+



medical committee chairman, a trainer, and a radio doctor. He leaves a wife, Mary, and a son. [DAVID GODFREY] P+

John Terrance Gardiner



Former general practitioner Belfast (b 1916; q Cambridge/Belfast 1943; FRCGP), died from a heart attack on 21 March 2001.

After graduation, he volunteered for the Royal Air Force and served in Sri Lanka as a general duty medical officer. After being discharged, he became a singlehanded GP in East Belfast. This required much courage as it was in an area of intermittent denominational violence. Terrance always drove sports cars and was a rally driver, having been co-driver of the winner of the Monte Carlo rally. He was also an amateur magician and was a member of the Magic Circle. He leaves a wife, Norah; three children; and five grandchildren. [ARNOLD ELLIOTT] P+

John Terence Hennigan

Former general practitioner Ealing (b Newcastle 1939; q Glasgow 1964), d 6 July 2002.

John did house jobs in medical surgery and obstetrics in Glasgow before travelling to London to work in haematology at St Thomas's and in chest medicine at the Brompton Hospital. He then became a general practitioner in Ealing until he retired in 1990 because of ill health. He was a distinguished chess player and spent many Saturday mornings coaching mini rugby. Divorced in 1993, he leaves four sons. [WILLIAM I FRASER] P+

Richard Stanley Charles Howell

Consultant anaesthetist Coventry and honorary senior clinical lecturer University of

Birmingham (b Lydney, Gloucestershire, 1945; q London 1968; DOBst RCOG, FRCA) died on 16 July 2002 following surgery.

In addition to being a first class anaesthetist, Richard was always delighted to pass on his skills to others. He contributed significantly to postgraduate education, first as faculty tutor in Coventry and then as the Royal College of Anaesthetists' regional educational adviser, West Midlands (1989-96). He was an accomplished organist, and his deep Christian faith and love of music inspired many. Richard was also a regular and valued indexer at the British Institute of Organ Studies Archive. He leaves a wife, Sue. [D G TWEEDIE] P+

John William Nicholson

Former general practitioner Ardnamurchan (b Cockenzie, East Lothian 1919; q Edinburgh 1951), d 19 August 2002.

John Nicholson volunteered for military service in 1939 and spent six years in the Royal Navy. He was injured when his ship was bombed and was left with traumatic deafness, which was so severe in his student days that he had to find out about lectures from other students' notes. He worked in obstetrics for two years before deciding to settle in general practice, first in Derbyshire for nine years and then in Ardnamurchan. He retired in 1977 because of ischaemic heart disease. While in Ardnamurchan he was part of a group that set up the first and still flourishing white fish farm in Britain. He leaves a wife, Freda. [J S MILNE] P+

Jerome Patrick Wall



Former director of public health Ayrshire (b Greenock 1933; q Glasgow 1958; DPH, DPA, FFCM), died from prostate cancer on 29 June 2002.

After posts as medical superintendent and later group medical superintendent of South Lanarkshire Hospitals, he was appointed the first chief administrative medical officer of the newly created Ayrshire and Arran Health Board in 1974, and later director of public health in Ayrshire. At a time of great progress he made a notable contribution to the planning and equipping of new hospitals in North and South Ayrshire. He leaves a wife; four sons; and nine grandchildren. [W R MURDOCH] P+

Jillia Ann Chong



Staff grade in breast surgery Ealing Hospital, Middlesex (b Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1964; q University of the West Indies 1989; MSc, FRCS), died from cancer on 17 August 2002.

Jillia decided early on that she wanted to be a surgeon. She came to Britain after completing basic surgical training in Trinidad, and joined Ealing Hospital as a staff breast surgeon in 1997. Jillia had a great love for all things technical, and helped develop many data systems for the unit. She was a keen athlete, and loved world travel and cooking. When the relentless and aggressive nature of her cancer became obvious she remained content and never allowed any self pity to mar her famous smile. She leaves a partner and a son. [PARTO FOROUHI] P+

David Anthony Furniss

Former general practitioner Leeds (b Leeds 1927; q Leeds 1956), d 14 July 2002.

David Furniss did his national service in the East Yorkshire Regiment. After preregistration jobs he set up in general practice, building up a full list in 15 years. He was a polymath with a profound knowledge of monasteries, ceramics—especially Wedgwood—numismatics, industrial archaeology, and tramcars, and he was the author of an eclectic list of papers about these interests. Urbane, quick witted, and waspish, he was also a local

P+ Longer versions of these obituaries are available on bmj.com